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A
PARSON'S EXPERIENCE
IN A
PARISH ON POVERTY HILL

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A
PARSON'S EXPERIENCE

IN A
PARISH ON POVERTY HILL.

A Satire.

A STORMY DAY'S RECREATION.

BY
PARSON OLD SCHOOL.

BROOKLYN :
ORPHANS' PRESS—CHURCH CHARITY FOUNDATION,
1878.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

The following Satire was found among the papers recently left by a country clergyman, and contains a half humorous and half serious description of one of those New England institutions, known as a "Donation Party." The outlines of the picture will doubtless be familiar to many, in all sections of the country, and the result, of this particular one, is not unknown in the experience of some of his own profession.

PREFATORY NOTE.

The incidents referred to, are all founded on "*facts.*"

The Satire was written, merely as the recreation of a stormy day ; but at the request of friends who heard it read, and who thought it would be of general interest, it is now given to the public, as it was found, without alteration or amendment, or any attempt to remould or fashion it, to meet the requirements of literary criticism.

BROOKLYN, N. Y., *March*, 1878.

THE CALL.

A PARISH vacant, their church to fill,
A Parson would call to do their will;
For a full church would raise the price
Of land, and 'twould be so nice
If he would teach, or keep a school,
Make a wise child of every fool,
Bring pupils from far, or out of town,
And make genteel each country clown;
For this would bring a market home
To their very doors; and for some
'Twould be much better than send to a city

A PARSON'S EXPERIENCE

To sell their wares ; and, out of pity,
Could not the Parson otherwise live,
Something for preaching they would give,—
Few thinking to church their way to find,
For each had his own ax to grind.
The Merchant, had his goods to sell ;
The Farmer, veal, and butter as well ;
The Miller, corn would grind at his mill ;
The Doctor, would be ready to mix a pill ;
The Cobbler, shoes could cap at toes ;
The Smith, could make or mend the hoes ;
The Tailor, ready with shears and thimble,
Could mend old clothes with fingers nimble ;
The Joiner, could, when not in bed,
Make for each boy a wagon or sled.

IN A PARISH ON POVERTY HILL.

So they were zealous, and all agreed

To call a Pastor in their need.

The question was: Who should it be?

Some learned, eloquent D.D.,

Who could fill the church, rent the pews,

Take the right paper, and tell the news,

The last "price current," how veal-calves

Were selling—on legs or in halves—

What butter was worth; poultry and eggs,

Potatoes, corn, and shoemakers' pegs;

For in a small way each kept shop,

When rain his outdoor work did stop.

The Parson must be one, who could "draw"

Members from others; his own wood saw,

For they were few, and could not raise

A PARSON'S EXPERIENCE

Much for salary these hard days.
So a meeting was held ; and there were ten,
Who thought—the women, if not the men—
Would like to have church, and also go
To worship, and then sometimes sew
In society, get up a fair
To pay the parson, would one come there.
So a vote was passed, that they would raise
Two hundred dollars, in various ways.
This last was writ in parish book ;
And committee for a Parson to look
Appointed, with full legative powers—
For they had met 'mid April showers.
One Parson was called ; but when he looked
First at the vote, which they had booked,



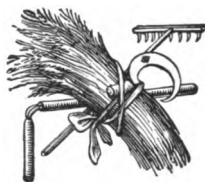
"Declined outright —he preferred," &c.

IN A PARISH ON POVERTY HILL.

Declined outright—he preferred to stay
Where people would more salary pay.
A neighboring Parson, he knew a man
Whom they could get, if to his plan
They would agree ; and they were pleased,
To have their own weak shoulders eased.
His plan was this : a man will preach
For me on Sunday next, when each
Member of your parish can come
And hear him, and then you at home
Can call him, but you must double
Your offer, or you will have trouble,
A Parson to find, your church to fill,
Upon the top of so high a hill.
The men were pleased, and home they went,

A PARSON'S EXPERIENCE

A call made out and duly sent
To this same Parson whom they had heard;
But of parish vote said not a word.
Yet they the very liberal offer,
Of four hundred dollars a year did proffer.



IN A PARISH ON POVERTY HILL.

THE ACCEPTANCE.

THE Parson accepted, went right to work
The parish to find; yet here's the quirk,
Where were the people on Sunday?
At their own meetings, except on one day,
When nothing else to do they had,
Then his audience was not bad.

Then through the country all around
He called, but few who went to church he
found;
Of those who professed religion, plenty,
But of church-going men scarce twenty;

A PARSON'S EXPERIENCE

And of these, few knew the reason,
Why 'twas they kept the Christmas season,
Unless, to eat roast pork, mince pies,
And dress the Church to please the eyes.
In this latter, the girls were zealous
To catch the beaux; yet some were jealous
When John, or David, handed pine
To Mary, or Sarah wanted twine,
A wreath for the chancel to make:
So much zeal did Christmas awake.
And meetings, then, there were, for singing,
Which the young together were bringing,
And if in either the Parson did peep,
He must be blind, or silence keep,
When cards or dominoes aside



"In this latter the girls were zealous."

IN A PARISH ON POVERTY HILL.

Were slyly pushed, the game to hide,
Lest some young man he should offend,
And to his usefulness put an end.
For if he spoke 'twould raise the ire
Of some choice member of the choir—
If he or she, perchance, got mad,
In church no singing could be had.
Thus he labored, and thus endured
The evils which could not be cured.

Yet all were not such. Some there were
Who loved the church, and joined in prayer ;
Who, like the righteous saints of old,
Were not afraid of rain or cold ;
Who in good works were never slack,
And from the Parson would not hold back

A PARSON'S EXPERIENCE

Aught which they had to cheer his heart,
So long as he would do his part.
Yet they were few ; not many men,
But women mostly—eight or ten—
And, as the dial, these choice few
Were always kind, and just, and true :
True to their Lord, themselves, their priest,
And from the right wouldn't swerve the least.
Such are the ones to whom 'tis given
To share the brightest bliss of heaven.
Yet here on earth, perhaps, 'tis meet
The "tares" to find among the "wheat."



IN A PARISH ON POVERTY HILL.

AN INTERVIEW.

THE lonely Parson sat musing still
In his study on the top of Poverty Hill,
When, lo! a step, and ring of the bell
At his front door startled him well:
A thing so rare; what could it mean?
A funeral, or a marriage, I ween!
But, no! neither one nor the other,
But only a call from a lay brother,
Who thought the Parson, or the church,
Might never be left in the lurch;
Would the Parson consent to the use

A PARSON'S EXPERIENCE

Of his house, all free from abuse,
For the people to make a "Donation"—
To him and his family, a grand ovation.

Then bowing low, the Parson consented,
With thanks and smiles, his joy he vented,
Bustled around and placed a chair,
And when his guest was seated there,
Engaged in free and easy chat,
Now about this, now about that.
When the Treasurer—for he it was—
As the Parson a moment did pause,
Raised his eyebrows with quizzing leer,
And said: "My good sir, I hear,
On Christmas Day you had a V,
Enclosed in a letter from Mrs. B."



"Raised his eye-brows with quizzing leer."

IN A PARISH ON POVERTY HILL.

"Truly so," quickly the Parson replied,

"Such tokens of good will long abide

In the memory, and cheer the heart

Of the poor Parson, who does his part."

"But," says the Treasurer, "did you credit
So much on your salary debit?"

"No, indeed!" the Parson replies,

Who now in turn opened his eyes,

"I thought it a *present*, to cheer

My heart, in this lonely place here."

"Oh! ah!" says the Treasurer, "I guess,

You'll find it intended to make less

The amount due from the parish—

We wish all things to be garish.

I saw her 'man' and asked him to give

A PARSON'S EXPERIENCE

Something to help the Parson to live,
And he replied, 'My wife, said she
On Christmas Day had sent him a V.'"
"Well, well: I'll correct the mistake,"
Said the Parson. So he did make
A new entry in cash-book that day.
The Treasurer, pleased, went on his way.
But the Parson mused: "Is that the way
These people trick on Christmas Day—
When the Lord of glory, to atone
For grossest sins that man had done,
Left the bright realms of His Father's love,
Left all the glory of heaven above,
And came to this benighted earth,
A world so simple—so little worth—

IN A PARISH ON POVERTY HILL.

And on the eve, or in early morn,
Was found on earth, the Virgin born?
Is that the way these people show
Their joy in Christ, by causing woe
In the poor man's heart, who for God's
call

Forsakes the walks of business—all?
And trusts for life, for raiment, food,
To such Christians for worldly good!
Oh! no! this really cannot be
The meaning of that anonymous V.
Some mistake the Treasurer has made;"
But it brought on the Parson a shade
Of suspicion that the "Donation"
Might not prove a real ovation.

A PARSON'S EXPERIENCE

Yet full consent he now had given,
And could not stop ; it must be driven
To fulfilment, or consummation,
E'en should it prove no fine "Donation."



IN A PARISH ON POVERTY HILL.

DONATION DAY.

THE day arrived, the house was swept,
But his thoughts, the Parson kept
To himself, nor once had vented
The fears to his mind presented.
Hoping and wishing that the devil,
Might be a false prophet of evil.

The morn was cold, the evening bleak,
Yet the Parson would not be a sneak.
The chairs were 'ranged, the house was
warmed ;
The women came, the people swarmed ;

A PARSON'S EXPERIENCE

Forty couples—if couples they were—
Who came in singly, the men not there ;
One waiting on another man's wife,
Regardless of domestic strife :
Others with children did come,
Leaving wife and baby at home—
The children, dear souls, to get of food
Their money's worth, for the Parson's good :
Young girls, in pairs, to catch the beaux,
Older maidens, for husbands—who knows ?
Old men, young women—thus they came,
Or if they didn't, who's to blame ?
The invitations were printed—
Some sent here, some there, some stinted,
Which gave offence to a certain few ;



"With baskets filled."

IN A PARISH ON POVERTY HILL.

This we know would be nothing new.
But in this, none consulted the Parson—
He'd as soon been guilty of arson,
As passing a washwoman in slight,
Especially on "Donation" night.

Thus they came, the grave, the gay, the
wise,

With baskets filled with cakes and pies,
Coffee and tea, as each was able,
All good things for a bountiful table,
Which soon was cleared of all its load—
Clean as grass with the scythe is mowed.
Then came the time for the young to frolic,
No dancing! no! that would give cholic
To the Parson; but Button and Pawn,

A PARSON'S EXPERIENCE

Copenhagen, for ladies in lawn,
To entice young men to kissing,
While fathers and mothers were missing.
And thus they romp, and then, they play
Charades, to pass dull time away,
Until the very late hour of ten
By the clock, when the vestrymen,
Fearing some might slip away home,
Forgetting for what *they* had come,
Pass round the hat to get some cash,
To help the Parson buy beef and hash.
Then, when all that could be, was gathered,
And some were shaved, not being lathered,—
The Parson, a speech of thanks must make
To those who had eaten their cake,

IN A PARISH ON POVERTY HILL.

Drank their coffee, or sipped their tea,
Lest some might think, that his, or he
Were ungrateful, for so much money,
As had been gathered, as bees do honey,
In driblets, currency fractional,
Though some were units, pactional
For a whole family of six,
So nicely did some their prices fix.
Yet some one did the Parson thank,
For five dollars on a broken bank.

Then came the speech of Mr. P.
For the assembled company ;
He praised the Parson, told his worth,
His learning, talents, and so forth,
Expressing great and high regard ;

A PARSON'S EXPERIENCE

Then tendered the cash, not as reward,
But as token of the estimation
Of those who made the "Donation."
When all this, and more, was ended,
And each his way home had wended,
The Parson retired the cash to count,
And found the whole exact amount,
Of dollars, thirteen and two score,
To which he should add a little more,
To wit, seventeen cents in copper,
Which to omit would not be proper.



THE RESULT.

TIME passed on, weeks—five or six,
When the Doctor called—no dose to mix,
But to talk of the Parish, and how
The Parson fared, and his family, now;
How much the Parish was in arrears,—
“For,” says the Doctor, “I think it appears,
With the money you have received,
The Parish obligation is relieved.”
“How’s that? How’s that, my Doctor, dear?
There’s some mistake, I greatly fear!”
“But,” says he, “How much has been paid?”

A PARSON'S EXPERIENCE

You are the one mistaken, I'm afraid."

The book was sought, the dollars counted,
The whole received in all amounted,
In seven full months—it grieves me much
It is so little, but truth is such—
In dollars fifty and one hundred.

"Pray, good Doctor, have I blundered?"

"Ahem! Reverend sir, by your own
showing,

Your salary's paid—all's that owing
For the first six months. Did not you
Agree to preach, whether many or few
Came to the church, for one whole year
For four hundred dollars? I fear
That you of lucre are too greedy,



"The parson sighed."

IN A PARISH ON POVERTY HILL.

And so complain of being needy :
One hundred, fifty, *and the 'Donation'*
Fulfill our six months' obligation."

The Parson sighed ; he clasped his
head,

His heart was bursting, and he said,
"If such were really the intents
Of those who gave so many cents,
And you will give me each man's name,
With sum affixed, I'll count the same
As so much paid on what is due,
And give receipt for all to you ;
But never more call it '*Donation*'—
And then, accept my resignation."

The Doctor left, his task to do,

A PARSON'S EXPERIENCE

But each, ashamed his hand to show,
How small the sum, no writing came,
And so was spared the Vestry's shame.





